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ABSTRACT

Under a contract with the Ministry of Education the working party prepared a general system for describing language teaching objectives to be used in higher education. The system is based on the specification of language use situations. By means of it the course objectives may be described in the form of communicative tasks, which the students are expected to master after the completion of the various courses. The tasks are grouped together into language user roles. The various communicative tasks are specified by means of six sets of variables; topics, framework of communication, stages and their basic functions, message-processing methods, modes of communication, and language use. A more extensive report (188 pp.) has appeared in Finnish in the Reports from the Language Centre No. 2/1974, ISBN 951-677-262-5. It includes a review of recent developments in the description of language teaching objectives in Finland and in some other countries, a description of the theoretical foundations and numerous appendices which illustrate various aspects of the model. Suggestions about the application of the system are made and measures concerning further development are recommended. (Author)

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3/1974

A systematic description of language teaching objectives based on the specification of language use situations

Abridged version

A SYSTEMATIC DESCRIPTION OF LANGUAGE TEACHING OBJECTIVES BASED ON THE SPECIFICATION OF LANGUAGE USE SITUATIONS

Abridged version

Roland Freihoff
Sauli Takala

SUMMARY

The present study was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and was carried out under the supervision of the work-group planning university-level language laboratory teaching.

This is an abridged version of the longer work by R. Freihoff and S. Takala, which contains 102 pages of text and 86 pages of sources and appendices.

The version is intended both for those people who decide on language course objectives, and for those interested in programmed teaching.

Principle: The work started from the principle that the planning of courses in practical language skills must commence with a description of the language skills that are set up as objectives. Objectives are not the same as methods: methods are attempts to achieve certain objectives. An objective is the basis for the evaluation of a method. By means of this particular descriptive system it is possible to describe the objectives of language courses in terms of the communicative tasks which a course-participant can be expected to cope with on the basis of tuition received, (see example, p. 4).

These tasks are grouped together into language-user roles (e.g. introducing a discussion, negotiating, lecturing, acting as expert, host, guest, guide, interpreter, etc.).

The various tasks can be specified more precisely by means of six groups of variables:

1. Topics (the objects of communication)
2. Framework of communication (situational factors)
3. Stages and their basic functions (contact/information)
4. Message-processing methods (repetition, modification, etc.)
5. Modes of communication (channels, communicative apparatus)
6. Language use (code and task-code)

The descriptive system can also be applied to:

- the planning of course material and teaching situations
- the planning of tests and the evaluation of performance
- the comparison of teaching-programmes
- other classificatory tasks.

Finally, proposals are made for producing additional clarifications and investigations, and for increasing cooperation among universities.

CONTENTS

A systematic description of language teaching objectives: main features

1. Primary objective of foreign language teaching: communicative skill 1
2. The need for greater precision in the definition of objectives 1
3. The principle of the system for the description of objectives: a limited number of specific communicative tasks 2
4. Stages in the description of objectives for a language course 4
   4.1. Sam le description of overall objective and macro-objectives 4
   4.2. Planning and decision-making bodies 7
5. Description of micro-objectives 8
   5.1. Topics 8
   5.2. Framework of communication 8
   5.3. Stages in the communicative process and their basic functions 10
   5.4. Modes of communication, message-processing methods 12
   5.5. Form channels and media of communication 12
      5.51 Channels 12
      5.52 Cross-tabulation 13
      5.53 Media, or communicative apparatus and other arragements 15
   5.6. Code or language use 15
      5.61 General language, specialized language 15
      5.62 The norm-level and error-tolerance in language use 16
6. A sample micro-description of a communicative task 17
7. Selection and classification of teaching material 19

Other possible applications of the descriptive system and the need for further investigations 20

The systematic description of language teaching objectives: main features

1. Primary objective of foreign language teaching communicative skill [1)]

At the present time the generally accepted primary objectives language teaching are:

- the ability to understand the spoken and written language
- the ability to express oneself in speech and in writing

in such a way that those communicative tasks related to international intercourse can be handled.

The following subsidiary objectives are considered to belong to the primary objectives:

- an acquaintance with the cultures of foreign countries, including, for example, literature and art, customs and existing conditions, and
- an education for international understanding.

It should be noted, however, that we cannot achieve the communicative skill set up as a primary objective without the knowledge and attitudes that are expressed as subsidiary objectives. The existing conditions in a foreign country, its cultural background, and international development form the basis and content of its present-day language. Without an acquaintance with the situations in which the language is used, we cannot even apply our basic vocabulary correctly.

2. The need for greater precision in the definition of objectives

No individual can learn his mother-tongue in such a way that he can talk impromptu on all the various topics related to all fields of existence in every situation, and at the same time use such language that would correspond to the norms accepted by the language community. Our language skill depends on the quality of our language contacts.

It follows from the above that the objectives of a language course of only a few hundred hours' duration should be selected and described extremely precisely according to:

- the topics
- the language use situations, and
- the level of the language use

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1) A more detailed account by Sauli Takala is presented in the original version.

In the past, the objective was primarily the understanding of a written text and, if possible, the mechanical word-for word "translation" of, for example, Finnish into "school-German". At such a time a list of literature and/or a reference to a textbook sufficed as the description of objectives.

In our time, objectives have diversified and they require a new method of description. Additional clarification is required for the mainly linguistic concepts utilized in more recent descriptions, for example: 'basic vocabulary', 'general vocabulary', 'special vocabulary', 'speech at normal speed', 'read texts related to a professional field without difficulty', 'a fairly simple text', 'the basic structures of a language', etc.

Students must know more precisely than before what they have to do in order to demonstrate that they have acquired the required communicative skill. Similarly, the designer of teaching materials must know what types of knowledge and skill belong to a course.

3. The principle of the system for the description of objectives: a limited number of specific communicative tasks.

The basis for the proposed descriptive system is that language use is dependent not solely on the topic, but primarily on the whole language use situation, which can be resolved into certain contributory factors (see below, section 5).

In a language use situation the speaker or writer (i.e. language-user) has a specific communicative task:

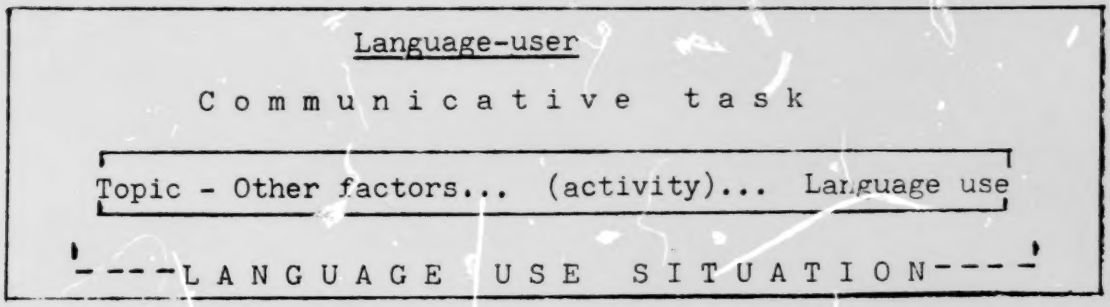
> e.g. the Ministry of Education commissions an abridged popular version of a larger work presenting a system for the description of language teaching objectives. Length, approx. 25 pages. Target audience: official bodies, decision-makers. Communicative purpose: rapid information and arousal of interest.

The communicative task thus forms a task-entity, which is defined with regard to subject or topic, contributory factors in the language use situation, and language use.

It is impossible to break this task-entity down into smaller units without losing the actual learning objective, which in fact constitutes this entity.

E.g. Formulating answers and questions is not conversation, forming sentences is not letter-writing, reading from a paper is not lecturing, spelling is not reading.

Diagram showing variables in the communicative event:



A more precise specification of the contributory factors in the language use situation is given below (section 5, pp. 8-16).

The role of the language-user is made up of a bundle of tasks which the language-user is expected to perform, e.g. role of reader= tasks of reader, including, for example, note-taking, selective copying, (quotations), collecting material (extracts), and making comments in the margin for private use. Role of guide = tasks of guide, such as welcoming the group, explaining the programme, leading the group, directing the group's attention to points of interest (through words and gestures), giving an interesting talk, final discussion, etc.

The primary monolingual, bilingual, monological, dialogical, written and spoken roles are as follows: (sub-roles in brackets)

Hearer
Reader
Speaker (lectures, introduces discussion, announces, recites)
Converser (negotiator, acts as host, guest, customer, etc.)
Writer (correspondent, reporter, etc.)
Interpreter (simultaneous, consecutive, etc.)
Translator (translator of specialized texts, translator of literary texts into Finnish, etc.)

The concept 'role of the language-user' helps to describe the teaching objectives from the student's viewpoint as meaningful communicative tasks.

4. Stages in the description of objectives for a language course
Overall objective - macro-objectives - micro-objectives

4.1. Sample description of overall objective and macro-objectives
Various stages in the description of objectives for a language course.

Description proceeds in the following order:

	Overall objectives	macro-objectives	micro-objectives
cf.	aims	goals	objectives
	Richtziele	Grobziele	Feinziele

Overall objective

The overall objective contains a brief statement of the underlying motivation for the course and its position in students' subject combination. The extent of the course is also given, e.g. 300 hours over a period of two years.

After this the topic of the course, the primary language use situations, the primary roles of the language-user, and conclusions affecting the language use are presented. The weighting to be attached to the various aspects is expressed by means of adverbs and by presenting them in order of importance.

The overall objective can be formulated very loosely, using so-called key-concepts, which nevertheless do embrace the whole course. Macro- and micro-objectives are merely a more detailed specification of the overall objective and contain nothing new.

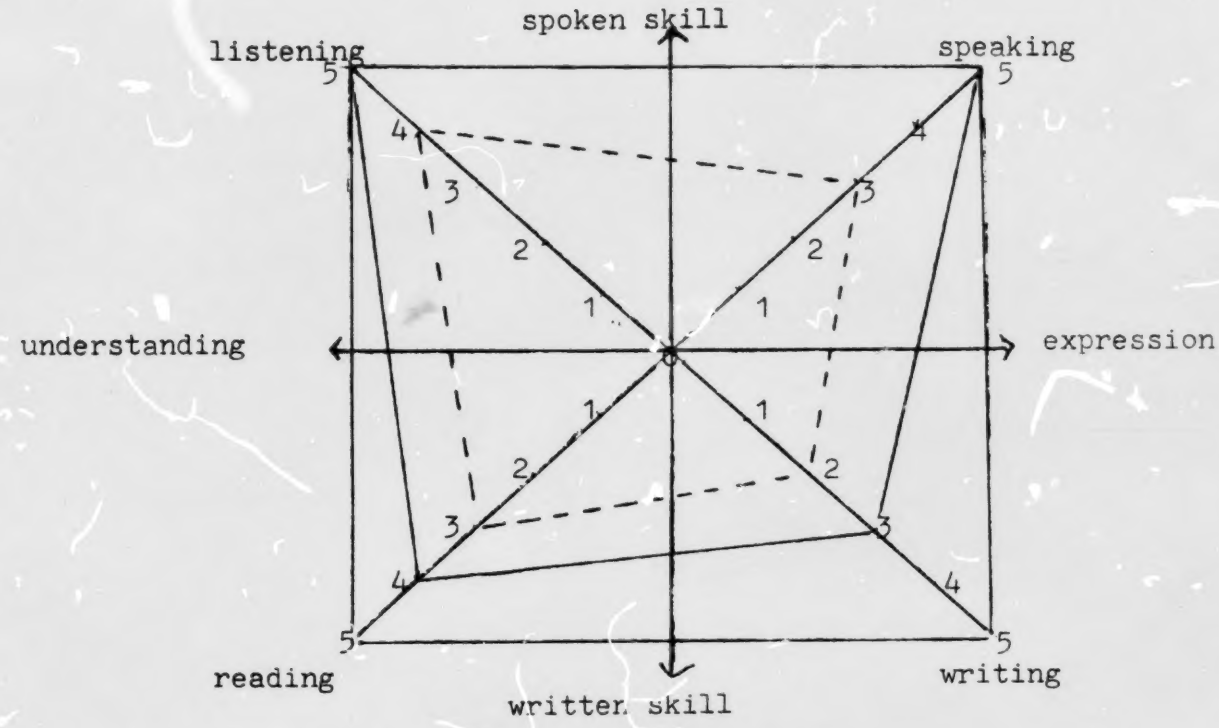
Example of overall objective:

(the example is invented)	"It can be expected that a graduate in
underlying motivation	economics who has completed this three-
	year course in German consisting of a
extent, position	total of 400 hours will be able to
	promote Finnish exports in German-
topics	speaking countries and in Finland.
key-roles	In addition, it is expected that the
language use situations	participant will be able to use German
	to represent his firm and Finland on
	semi-official and official occasions.
conclusions affecting	The main emphasis is placed on oral
language use	skills in negotiating, and on the
	command of specialized language."

Macro-objectives

The macro-objectives involve a closer specification of points expressed in the overall objective:

	"In order to achieve the overall objective, the student who has completed the course must be familiar with the following topics:
detailing of topics knowledge	An acquaintance with existing conditions and the cultural background of German-speaking countries, customs, everyday life.
	Specialized knowledge related to the economic life of German-speaking countries, their industry, methods of trade and negotiating habits, and the use of sources of information.
language use situations (spoken) additional activity	The main language use situations are: trade-fairs, exhibitions, demonstrations trade negotiations in small groups, organized meetings, telephone conversations, dictations, use of a PA-microphone, official parties .....
key-roles (spoken)	In these situations the course participant must be able to function as a negotiator, a discussion introducer, a chairman, a lecturer, a consultant, a spokesman, a converser, a host .....
language use situations (written)	Secondary language use situations are the written situations associated with the above: note-making, contracts, business transactions, correspondence.
key-roles	The course participant is expected to be able to dictate and to edit in these situations.
conclusions affecting language use	The sub-skills contributing to the language use skill in this particular language course are weighted as follows:



0 not required
1 minimal level of requirement
2 moderate
3 average level
4 above average level
5 extremely high

General language ----------

Specialized language _____

Combined table

Roles		Topics		Situations/tasks	Language
%		%			
40	negotiating introducing discussion		Finnish industry	conferences exhibitions trade-fairs	professional lang. related to specialized fields
10	chairman	60	product development	negotiations	
5	lecturer		trading customs	meetings briefings	language of formalities
5	adviser/ consultant		new products general matters	advice	means of conveying
3	spokesman guest		customs and habits	greetings thanks	information
5	converser		current events	requests, etc.	standard lang.
10	host		existing conditions	parties	
10	reader	40	cultural life	press, radio, TV, other sources	written lang.
12	hearer				specialized language
	editor		special life	notes, etc., correspondence	
100%		100%			

The relative weighting of the different aspects of the course can be expressed in percentages.

4.2. Planning and decision-making bodies

The outlining of overall and macro-objectives does not require linguistic training, so representatives of all interest-groups can take part in this: representatives of the learning-community, administrative authorities, potential employers, ex-students who have completed the course and who have sufficient professional experience, and so on.

In many cases it would be sufficient for a work-group to be set up and for its proposals to be evaluated. This is possible because an objective expressed in terms of topics and language use situations is as simple to understand as a job-description.

The definition of micro-objectives and the listing of material to be taught, any supplementary fieldwork, the collection and preparation of material, however, are activities that belong to the domain of linguistic researchers and syllabus and methods planners.

5. Description of micro-objectives

For the purposes of description of the communicative tasks, factors affecting the language use are defined with maximum possible precision.

5.1. Topics

Matters, thoughts, opinions, perceptions of objects and persons, etc., that communication is concerned with. The topics can be described by means of the Universal Decimal Classification system, for example:

830	'German literature'
830-3(091)"18"	'History of the German novel in the 19th century'
38(480:45)	'Trade relations between Finland and Italy'
622.33.03	'Geological features of coal seams'.

(See: Universal Decimal Classification (UDK) 1956, Helsinki: Suomen Kirjallisuuspalvelun Seura (ed.).)

A decimal classification could also be developed for the following groups of variables.

5.2. Framework of communication

The subsidiary factors in the language use situation referred to here are the circumstances in which communication takes place, from the point of view of the participants.

The framework of communication can be divided into five sub-groups: The relationship of the participants to:

- each other
- the subject
- the time
- the place
- th noise; internal distractors and external noise.

20 parameters or auxiliary variables have been derived from the framework of communication. The most important of these are:

- the position or status of the language-user with respect to the subject.
  This determines, for example, whether an instruction is understood as a recommendation or as an order, etc.

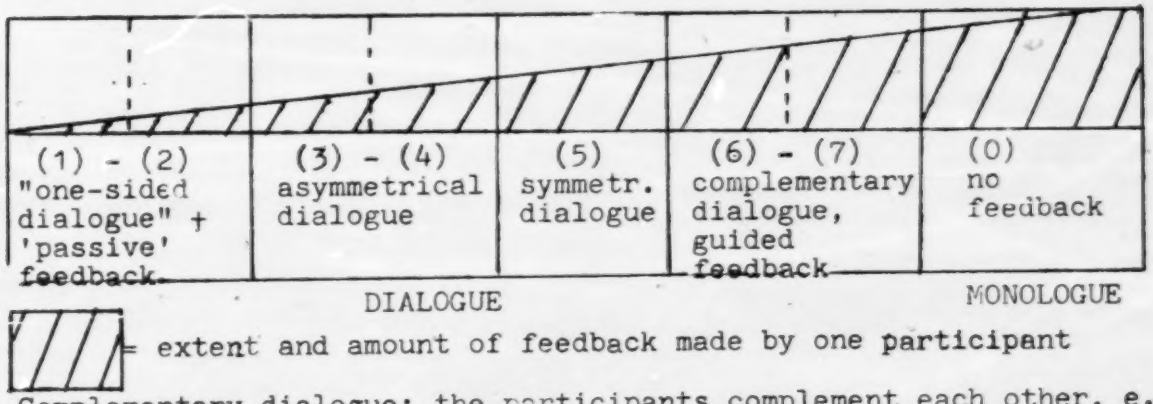
- the language-user's familiarity with the subject, his command of the subject. The different levels of information may result, for example, in a statement made by a comparative 'layman' being interpreted by an 'expert' as a question, for which confirmation is requested.
- the type of goal-orientation in the treatment of the subject, a fact-oriented or descriptive treatment, e.g. lecture, talk, news, etc.,
  a contact-oriented associative treatment, e.g. chatting, a reception, etc.,
  an argumentative treatment involving assertions and justifications, e.g. negotiations, a speech defending one's actions, etc.
- fluency in relation to the density of information; if, for example, the number of words per minute is chosen as the criterion of 'normal speed of speech'; then in the German language 'normal speed' has been found to vary between 63 and 207 words. Speech may be extremely slow if the message is concentrated and if the norm-level of language use, i.e. the degree of structural and lexical complexity, is high. 'Normal speed' thus depends on the amount of information per minute. The memory factor is defined in terms of the time intervals between the reception and transmission of the message. These intervals correspond to the structure of the human memory: the long-term memory is used when, for example, a talk is being given without notes; the short-term memory when the notes are occasionally glanced at; and where the message is received and transmitted simultaneously, we are concerned with silent reading, simultaneous interpretation, etc.
- the use of the physical environment occurs in situations where reference is made to persons present and objects, samples, pictures, etc., in such a way that language use and other accompanying activity are inextricably enmeshed (language in action). These so-called primary situations stand in contrast to secondary situations, where the whole situation has to be created linguistically, for example, on the telephone, radio, in stories and articles which are not accompanied by explanatory pictures, which would compensate for or support the use of language.

- the degree of publicity, or the opportunities for unknown outsiders to take part in the communication. A distinction is made here between private situations (only friends and acquaintances), non-public situations (e.g. certain meetings where only the result, decision, minutes, etc., are available publicly; semi-public situations (e.g. university lectures, meetings of a town-council); and public situations, such as television interviews, a speech in a market place, etc., where a large audience is present.
- noise factors, such as actual noise, background sounds, tiredness, stress, and linguistic noise such as the addresser's foreign accent, dialect features, the predictability or randomness of his errors, etc.

All these factors affect the choice of the means of expression and can serve as the basis for the classification of communicative tasks and as a criterion for their degree of difficulty.

5.3. Stages in the communicative process and their basic functions

The communicative task can be divided into more or less independent sub-stages, for example: initial stage (greeting), central stage (actual conversation), and final stage (concluding the conversation). The actual conversation consists of sequences of alternating utterances. Depending on the degree of activity and intentions of the participants, conversations (dialogues) are balanced (symmetrical) where the speakers contribute equally, or one-sided (asymmetrical) where one speaker dominates and decides the choice of subjects, and the other merely expresses astonishment, admiration, politeness, etc. If one participant speaks and the other does not interrupt or make immediate comment, we are concerned with a monologue.


(1) - (2) "one-sided dialogue" + 'passive' feedback
(3) - (4) asymmetrical dialogue
(5) symmetr. dialogue
(6) - (7) complementary dialogue, guided feedback
(0) no feedback
DIALOGUE
MONOLOGUE
= extent and amount of feedback made by one participant

Complementary dialogue: the participants complement each other, e.g. in an interview.

If a certain stage - a sub-stage of the communication - is emphasized and enlarged, it becomes an independent communicative task; for example, a greeting may be expanded into a speech of welcome, a short comment into a full presentation, and the concluding of a conversation may take the form of closing remarks, etc. At the same time division of labour occurs since the tasks are divided among the various speakers.

A series of communicative tasks are termed 'task-complexes', for example: arranging a meeting over the phone - welcoming and showing the visitor around the factory - discussion - a memorandum of the discussion - drawing up a contract, etc.

Certain communicative tasks can also be divided into preparatory stages and specific stages of execution, depending on the level of performance required and on the possibilities for division of labour, for example: the ideational stage in letter-writing - drafting a note - dictating the letter - typing the letter - signing the letter. In such cases we refer to '<u>multi-stage tasks</u>'.

The concepts 'task-complex' and 'multi-stage task' help in the outlining of task-entities or communicative tasks that are set up as the objectives of the language course.

<u>Basic functions - contact and information</u>

The stages of communication and the entire communicative tasks can be classified according to their basic objectives into fact-oriented and contact-oriented activities.

The initial and concluding stages of communication generally contain contact elements: a speech of welcome, a formal opening, etc., where the confirmation and cementing of social contacts in various rituals, and influencing (guidance) come to the forefront. Because language is a social phenomenon, fact-oriented language use will always contain contact elements, too.

A typical fact-oriented (information-oriented) communicative task is a lecture, a talk, a piece of news neutral in tone, etc., where elements expressing the viewpoint of the addresser (irony, comments, doubt, conviction, etc.) are absent, just as those elements that appeal to the addressee (encouragement, pleading, polite phrases, etc). It follows from this that actual fact-oriented texts are in the minority.

5.4. Modes of communication, message-processing methods

The nature of the communicative task depends on whether the message to be transmitted is a repetition of some other message received, a modified version of it, or a modification with an additional viewpoint expressed, or whether it is an observation or the expression of an original thought.

Example: repetition: quotation, transcription, silent reading, an oath, etc.
modification: résumé, commentary, translation, criticism
thought: invention, aphorism, diary, etc.

5.5. Form, channels, and media of communication

5.51 Channels

It is customary to divide language skills according to the four sub-skills as follows:

	input channel	output channel
spoken channel	listening	speaking
written channel	reading	writing

In addition, however, language activity includes the following non-linguistic channels:

	input channel	output channel
external channel	perceiving	acting
internal channel	thinking	storing in memory

When all these channels are combined, we have 12 criteria for the classification of communicative tasks:

input linguistic	↓ 2 read	
1 listen →	↓ 4 in order to speak 5 in order to write 6 in order to act 6b in order to remember	8 types
input non-linguistic	↓ 3b think	
3 perceive →	4 in order to speak 5 in order to write	4 types

Total: 12 types

To this table can be added the activities associated with bilingual x) communication where input and output are linguistic:

Interpretation activities:	listen x in order to speak	in the other language
	read x in order to speak	" " "
Translation activities:	read x in order to write	" " "
	listen x in order to write	" " "

The last-mentioned task seems unusual, but it can even be a profession; for example, following radio news and comment in a foreign language, and then modifying it for the purposes of a translation summary (Rundfunkauswerter).

The impromptu oral translation of a text (commentary) on the other hand is nothing unusual for an interpreter.

5.52 Cross-tabulation

By cross-tabulating input-output channels
the memory-factor (i.e. input-output interval),
and message-processing methods

we obtain approximately 100 types of communicative task.

Five separate processing methods have been used here:

(a) repetition
(b) abstracting modification
(c) expanding
(d) comments made in reply
(e) modification and additional thought

The input channels are: 1. listening output channels 4. speaking
2. reading 5. writing
3. perceiving 6. acting
3b. thinking

The input-output intervals: C simultaneously / contemporaneously
S short-term memory, immediately (successively), in small doses
L storing in the long-term memory

Example: 2-T 'read and store in memory'
2-C-4(a) 'read aloud'
2-S-4(a) 'repeat, e.g. phrase'by phrase'
1-L-5(c) 'write and comment (expand) on the basis of information heard, using memory'
2-S-5(c) ' " , making use of notes'
2-S-4 'oral presentation on the basis of a reduced text that has been read, e.g. glancing (successively) at the page'.

19/20

The examples above represent monolingual processing of the message.

Creative language use is emphasized when the activity involves the expression of perceptions and thoughts.

3-L-4 (d) 'e.g., an eye-witness recounting and presenting his observations (in reduced form)'

3-L-5 (e) ' as above, in written form, with comments'.

Language-based activity where the language-user is merely a reader or a hearer, e.g:

2-C-6 (a) 'act while reading an instruction'

2-S-6 (a) 'act according to written instructions, reading each point separately, successively'

1-L-6 'act on the basis of recall of a message heard previously'

Bilingual processing of the message

One extra number is added to the channels: 1=native language, 2=foreign language. In respect of its processing method, translation is generally a modification, since the translator must always condense or expand the message in the source language. For this reason, the processing method is only mentioned if it is given particular emphasis, for example:

22-S-51 'translation from foreign language into native language' (translator works section by section, reading from the original text)

22-S-51 (b) ' " , translation summary'

12-C-41 'simultaneous interpretation into native language'

22-S-41 (c) 'oral explanation in the native language of a text in the foreign language'

Combinations could naturally also be presented in a 'multi-branched' form, if, for example, it is to be emphasized that input has taken place via different channels, or output has taken place after different time intervals, etc. Example:

2 / S-4 (c) \ L-6 'the language-user gives an oral commentary on a text he has read, and subsequently carries out an action on the basis of memory'

3 \ L-4 (c) / 1 'the language-user gives an oral commentary on events from memory, and explains what has been said in this connection'

The system could be further developed as required.

5.53 Media, communicative apparatus, and other arrangements

In evaluating the degree of difficulty of the communicative tasks, attention has to be paid to mechanical, electro-mechanical, and electro-acoustic means of communication. The communicative apparatus affects language use, for example: telephone, telegram, telex, illustrated text. Furthermore, the communicative apparatus may supplement or replace the language use, e.g. models and samples. Other appratus produces written text, such as the typewriter and computer.

Organized situations are also regarded as channels or communicative apparatus, e.g. meetings, press conferences, lectures, seminars, etc.

The mass-media - radio, television, the press - constitute an independent group, which has a powerful influence on language use.

All of the above may be included in the communicative tasks that are the objectives of the language course.

5.6 Code (i.e. language use)

5.61 General language, specialized language

In the description of objectives for a specific course, mention should also be made of the language use that is being aimed at, although in principle it can be derived from the description of the topic and language use situation, unless it is desirable to deviate for some reason from the accepted norms of a particular language community.

The notion 'general language' (non-specialized registers) can be divided into subsidiary concepts such as a reduced form of the general language for foreigners (Basic English, Grunddeutsch, Le français fondamental); the standard spoken language (e.g. the language used in the information media, the language used officially); the written language (the written form of the general language), which partly differs from the spoken form; and the dialect forms of the general language in the various parts of the language area.

Specialized language also appears as a reduced school language in special courses, and also in a popularized form that is very close to the general language as a scientific language; and as a practical professional language.

Dialects and slang forms hardly ever seem to be included among the objectives of practical language courses. Nevertheless researchers, supervisors, guides, interpreters, and others coming into contact with these forms of the language will at least require the ability to understand them.

5.62 The norm-level and error-tolerance in language use

Depending on the communicative tasks set up as course objectives, an average norm-level is determined, i.e. the degree of development of language use.

I. Restricted level of language use in addition to other non-linguistic activity
II. Extended level of language use, simple sentences
III. Plus coordinating and subordinating relationships, restricted vocabulary
IV. Plus command of idiom, longer sentences, fairly wide vocabulary
V. Plus nominalizations partly replacing subordinate clauses, versatile vocabulary and command of idiom.

The norm-level is not an absolute value. The language use may be simple and the underlying thoughts highly developed; for example, a surgeon uses norm-level I in his work, a pilot I-II. The communicative tasks decide which is the suitable norm-level.

The level of accuracy required in the language use must also be determined. Different language communities have different error tolerance levels in different communicative situations..This has to be ascertained for each language. Generally speaking, tasks may be divided into the following classes:

I. Error tolerance level extremely high, to the limits of communication
II. Moderate error tolerance level, especially with regard to grammatical form
III. Rather low error tolerance level with regard to both style and form
IV. Extremely low error tolerance level; high formal demands
V. Errors not permitted

Complete freedom from error is demanded anyway in the case of printed circulars, and public and official situations, etc.

6. A sample micro-description of a communicative task

The precision and detailedness of the micro-description depend completely on the intended purpose of the description. As a result the description presented below may seem too detailed for one reader, whereas for another it may appear too crude. Most detail is required by the person designing, e.g. tape-programmes as part of teaching material. If he does not obtain the necessary information, he must supply these details himself.

Sample description:

1. Firstly, the topic is mentioned in the form of a UDC number and descriptors:
   "UDC 384 Reform of university administration, position of teachers and students"
2. Then a title is introduced which defines the communicative task in terms of the six variables outlined above:
   "semi-public argumentative discussion with an expert, primarily using professional language. Expert adopts negative stand, speaker adopts positive stand."
3. The degree of difficulty of the task and other details can be derived from the parameter table, where specified points for difficulty are marked on the basis of the following features:

- Language use and topic	Norm-level, error tolerance level, specificity of topic
- General features of activity	Method of processing message or translation, channels, media, input-output interval (i.e. memory factor)
- General nature of the communicative task	Number of stages, type of goal-orientation, regulations or restrictions, e.g. with regard to the use of time, amount of text, etc. Activeness of participants, use of physical environment, degree of publicity, necessary additional activity (work, etc., in addition to language use).

- Noise factors	Linguistic noise (dialect features, etc.), acoustics, noise, distance. Competing stimuli (music, other distractors). Tiredness and stress.
- Relationship of participants to: subject time each other	Aspect (i.e. point of view) and attitude, knowledge of subject, status with regard to subject. Fluency and density of information, attitude to other participant. Deviation from familiar language use demanded by the situation (register switching) with respect to a particular person. Personality differences of participants (introvert/extrovert). Social status (age, sex, education, profession, etc.). Difference of conviction; participants announce, realize, or assume that they belong to different schools of thought, ideologies, or that there are fundamental differences between their attitudes to things (education, temperance, marriage, art, politics, science, etc.).

Any one of the factors listed above may become dominant and determine the status of all the other factors. A section of the list of factors may remain unused, (see the full-length version of this descriptive system).

In the above example the following parameters were not used: 'translating', use of media (communicative apparatus), 'regulations or restrictions', 'additional activity', 'noise factors'.

The following were dominant:
'type of goal-orientation', 'aspect' (attitude to subject, viewpoint), 'difference in knowledge of subject' (expert/layman).

It is of course possible to think of situations where difference of conviction is dominant, and the objectives of language courses could include, for example, the development of a moderate and open attitude to those whose opinions differ, and the respecting of the opinion and conviction of another individual. This is a point of primary importance in international intercourse and in Finland itself, and it is reflected at the last remove in language use, the choice of the means of expression.

7. Selection and classification of teaching material

It is intended that the descriptive system is applied to the definition of principles for the selection of teaching material for each language. At the same time the descriptive system may act as a criterion for the grading of material.

When the overall and macro-objectives have been determined, any necessary supplementary mapping will be done in the field, spoken and written material will be collected, and at the same time a note will be made of the 'production conditions' for the material in question, i.e. the sub-factors of the particular language use situations.

Only those situations that can be described can also be simulated and evaluated in teaching. The system for the description of objectives provides the necessary descriptive apparatus for the planning of teaching and testing situations.

> The material to be taught should be presented in the form of a stock of means of expression for each particular task-entity, together with rules for their application

The texts of those communicative tasks included among the course objectives are identified and the actual means of expression are classified. At the same time the rules for the application of the means of expression in a particular situation are noted down.

In this way task-codes are established. By combining the task-codes, systematic lists embracing the entire material are obtained:

Lists of information	Description of skills
- titles of communicative tasks	The quality
- rules for language use	and quantity of
- topics and background information	linguistic and
- vocabulary and phrases	non-linguistic
- structures	activity is described,
- morphological features	by means of which the
- pronunciation, intonation	intended communicative skill
in sentences, gesture, etc.	is demonstrated:
	communicative tasks.

The description thus extends in many directions and requires a large amount of cross-tabulation. A computer or card-index system could be used for this purpose.

The basic tabulation would look like this:

	Information	Skills
Task no.	1 2 3 4 5 ..	1 2 3 4 5 ..
1	x x x	x x x
2	x x x	x x x
3	x x x x	x x x x
etc.		

Material that has been processed in this way will form a good starting point for the planning of the syllabus, methods, and materials for a language course.

The objective of a language course aiming at communicative skill can be and should be expressed as a number of communicative tasks.

Only an objective that has been precisely expressed may act as the criterion of teaching methods and student performance, and as a justification for the allocation of time and resources.

Other possible applications of the descriptive system and the need for further investigations

The work-group considers that the system for the description of objectives outlined above can be utilized in a variety of ways. The most important of these possible applications are presented in the following pages.

1. Developing the communicability of the description of objectives

It is generally emphasized that objectives should be expressed in such a way that they mean the same to different individuals, in other words, they are communicable to the different bodies in the

teaching system (Ahlström, Bloom, Hastings & Madaus). The system developed here offers one possible frame of reference within which certain concepts and their mutual relationships can be clarified. On this basis those people interested in the description of objectives could make use of the same concepts in their discussion.

Proposal 1

The Ministry of Education could commission the establishing of seminars, in which the objectives of language teaching and methods for their description could be clarified.

2. Investigations of language needs

The descriptive system outlined here could be utilized in the mapping of quantitative and qualitative programme requirements. By means of the system more precise information could also be obtained about the general development of language skill needs (e.g. in the economy), and about the relationship existing between the teaching provided in schools and the expectations of the recipients (e.g. teacher-training).

Proposal 2

The Ministry of Education could commission the mapping and continuous evaluation of language skill needs.

3. Developing criteria for the evaluation of language skills

As a result of the more precise and detailed description of objectives, it might be possible to evaluate the sub-areas of language skill more effectively than has previously been the case, and to define how much emphasis is to be given to practical language studies in the examination system (e.g. in a credit-system).

Proposal 3

The Ministry of Education could commission an investigation into the degree of correspondence existing between the levels of achievement in practical language courses given at universities. On the basis of this investigation, a decision could be made on the validity of such achievement levels within the examination systems of the various universities.

4. Developing course programmes

The descriptive system could be utilized in the following ways:

1) developing learning situations
2) identifying and simulating communicative tasks
3) planning and developing course material

Materials produced by means of the system could be located within an overall framework in accordance with the communicative tasks. For this reason the material could in all probability be given an authentic form.

Proposal 4

The Ministry of Education could see that objectives in language teaching development projects are expressed with sufficient clarity and precision.

5. Classifying and Filing material

With the expansion of programme production, it is extremely important that material is classified and filed in an efficient manner. It is the opinion of the work-group that the descriptive system can be used in the design or further development of detailed classificatory systems for material. Such systems would enable the rapid and accurate filing of material on the one hand, and, for example, the use of a computer in the recovery of material on the other.

The parameters of the descriptive system can be expressed by means of decimal classification. A thesaurus-type reference system (descriptors) could be adapted for the straightforward classification of programme contents.

Proposal 5

The Ministry of Education could investigate the possibilities of adapting a decimal classification and a descriptor system for the classifying and filing of teaching material.

6. Research and development activity

The work-group considers that research in language didactics should be intensively developed in Finland. A considerable proportion of curriculum time in school is used for the study of foreign languages. University-studies, too, depend to a large extent on the use of material written in a foreign language. Thus it is clear that every year a considerable amount of time and money is devoted to the study of languages. At the present moment, however, Finland does not possess a single centre or institute which could carry out the systematic investigation and development of language teaching and learning.

Language teaching is an area whose development involves interdisciplinary research activity. The development of syllabuses, teaching methods and materials presupposes expert knowledge in at least the following fields:

- sociology, especially the sociology of language and sociolinguistics
- psychology, especially the psychology of learning
- psycholinguistics and applied linguistics
- linguistics, and its various sub-fields, including comparative linguistics and general linguistics
- communication and information theory
- educational science, didactics

It is natural that expert knowledge in the above fields presupposes an entire group of research workers.

Proposal 6

The Ministry of Education could see that concentrated research activity into language learning is initiated. Such research would be concerned primarily with all the different aspects of the language learning situation. A research group could be set up which would carry out an investigation of linguistic communication in general, and thus it would simultaneously serve the needs of mother-tongue teaching. In connection with this research activity, a language teaching and language research information and documentation service should be established.

7. Miscellaneous investigations

Particular attention should be directed to the following research tasks:

1) It should be made clear how much information can be taught when it is organized in various ways into meaningful entities (chunks, see Miller). Subsequently the size of such an entity should be investigated so that a comparison can be made between the amount of information and the amount of learning contained in various courses.
2) Consideration to be given to a person's basic character and native-language competence in the teaching and evaluation of a foreign language.
3) The development of pedagogical grammars to meet the needs of Finns in learning languages (referring to the most important foreign languages). Furthermore, an investigation should be made of uniform teaching codes and of a uniform metalanguage to be used in teaching foreign languages to Finns.

4) Contrastive studies of Finnish and the major foreign languages should be continued and given further support. In addition to linguistic comparisons, sociological and sociolinguistic comparisons should be carried out. The results should be presented in the form of material lists with consideration for their teaching suitability.
5) Comprehension tests. The internal validity of material testing listening comprehension in particular, but also reading comprehension, should be investigated with special regard to channels.
6) The use of aids in communicative tasks and tests of language skill. The relationship of their use to the level of the language and translation skill should be clarified. Furthermore, it should be specified for each course what kinds of texts can be expected to be understood and translated without aids, and why and when such behaviour is required, bearing in mind the effects of such requirements on study.
7) The description of the differences between general language and specialized language. A catalogue of the means of expression for different levels of language in a particular language and a comparison with Finnish usage. A specific communicative task or task-type should always be chosen as the point of departure.
8) Error tolerance level from the point of view of teaching on the one hand, and from the point of view of the intended communicative tasks on the other (in a profession, in a trade), bearing in mind the expectations and values of the language community in this respect.
9) Communication tactics: should they be taught, how should they be taught, what kind of material should be used, etc. The effect of noise on the communicative situation should be investigated, together with its relationship to the level of language skill and its applicability to language teaching.

Proposal 7

The Ministry of Education could encourage the initiation of the above research work in the form of projects and/or within the framework of the universities' own research programmes.

Tiivistelmäkortti

Freihoff, R. & Takala, S. (1974) A systematic description of language teaching objectives based on the specification of language use situations. Abridged version. Kielikeskuksen julkaisuja 3. Jyväskylän yliopisto. ISBN 951-677-307-9.

Opetusministeriön toimeksiannosta laadittiin yliopistotasoisen käytännön kielitaidon kurssien suunnittelun pohjaksi kielitaidon yleinen tavoitekuvausjärjestelmä. Tämän avulla voidaan kuvata kurssien tavoitteita viestintätehtävinä, joista kurssin käyneen odotetaan suoriutuvan. Kielenkäyttötilanteet on koottu erilaisiksi kielenkäyttäjän rooleiksi. Erilliset viestintätehtävät määritellään tarkemmin kuuden muuttujaryhmän avulla: aihepiirit, viestintäpuitteet, vaiheet ja niiden perusfunktiot, sanoman käsittelytavat, viestintämuodot ja kielenkäyttönormit. Raportti on ilmestynyt laajempana laitoksena (188 s.) suomeksi Kielikeskuksen julkaisusarjassa n:o 2/1974, ISBN 951-677-262-5. Se sisältää edellisen lisäksi katsauksen kielenopetuksen tavoitekuvauksen viimeaikaiseen kehitykseen Suomessa ja eräissä muissa maissa, kuvausjärjestelmän teoreettisen lähtökohdan selvityksen sekä lukuisia taustaa valaisevia liitteitä. Lopuksi siinä esitetään järjestelmän soveltamismahdollisuuksia sekä toimenpide-ehdotuksia.

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Freihoff, R. & Takala, S. (1974) A systematic description of language teaching objectives based on the specification of language use situations. Abridged version. Reports from the Language Centre No 3. University of Jyväskylä. Finland. ISBN 951-677-307-9

Under a contract with the Ministry of Education the working party prepared a general system for describing language teaching objectives to be used in higher education. The system is based on the specification of language use situations. By means of it the course objectives may be described in the form of communicative tasks, which the students are expected to master after the completion of the various courses. The tasks are grouped together into language user roles. The various communicative tasks are specified by means of six sets of variables: topics, framework of communication, stages and their basic functions, message-processing methods, modes of communication, and language use. A more extensive report (188 pp.) has appeared in Finnish in the Reports from the Language Centre No. 2/1974, ISBN 951-677-262-5. It includes a review of recent developments in the description of language teaching objectives in Finland and in some other countries, a description of the theoretical foundations and numerous appendices which illustrate various aspects of the model. Suggestions about the application of the system are made and measures concerning further development are recommended.